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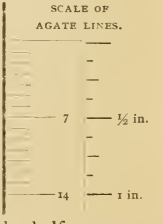

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THE DRAMA AND THE STATE.

DRAMATURGY to-day, among English-speaking nations, presents an anomaly strange in itself, and unprecedented in the history of this art. Formerly 'the drama' was held in high esteem, and 'the stage' in an equal contempt. For two hundred years, without fear of contradiction, we pointed to Shakespeare, writer of plays, as the greatest of all writers; on our literature of the stage, we based our claim to ownership of the world's greatest literature, while, at the same time, the stage itself was shunned by pious folk, repeatedly condemned by church and by council, and the poor players placed under social ostracism, sometimes even denied sacraments, funeral rites, and marriage by the clergy. Within the last decade, and especially during the last few years of it, a very marked change appears. Stage and actor are now honored, but the drama, as a form of literary expression, is out of repute. The most eminent of living actors, Mr. Irving, is invited to lecture at the high seats of learning, both in England and America, and chooses for his theme the praise of his art; an English clergyman recently dedicated a memorial window to Shakespeare in a London church; play-houses multiply rapidly; the week-day audience at a first-class theatre is as intelligent, as well-mannered, and probably as virtuous as the Sunday audience at the church;—but no writer of genius enriches contemporaneous dramatic literature.

Now if the final cause of the existence of the theatre be pleasure, if it serve only for the adornment and amusement of life; if the stage be independent of literature and can thrive without it, we have small need to concern ourselves with the present state of affairs. But history teaches a different lesson. From its rude beginnings as a part of the most solemn religious rites of Paganism, through its term of

service as a teacher of Christian doctrine and religious dogma, down to its present mission of furnishing pictures of actual human life, the theatre has ever been a powerful force in education. Wherever there has been a truly national stage, that is, a stage fed from the rich harvest of the national literature, there the theatre has played a large part in the development of national life. Far-sighted and patriotic statesmen have not failed to notice a fact so significant and to shape their policies accordingly. Greece and Rome furnish notable examples, but we do not need to go so far back. If a true and full history were to be written of Hungary's great constitutional movement begun in 1848, it is said that some of its most instructive pages would have to be devoted to the part played by the national stage in the resuscitation of the national spirit. No pains were spared to attract to it all the literary talent of the country, and thus the regeneration of the Magyar language and nationality began on the stage rather than in the Diet.

We need not be surprised at such a policy, nor at the results attending it, if we consider how many faculties and needs of human nature are met and answered by the drama in its best estate. Actual life, for the majority of mankind, passes in attention to little cares, little duties, little thoughts, is, in fact, an immersion in littlenesses. Opportunities for the exercise of the heroic virtues are rare, daily walks seldom lead among stirring examples of worth and beauty. To lift whole masses of men from their dreary or common-place surroundings into higher planes of thought and feeling by the sight of that ideal nature which threatens to be lost in the stress of every-day life;—this is the true purpose of the drama, and for this it addresses the whole nature of man,—taste, mind, heart, conscience, imagination. It is scarcely necessary to dwell upon its appeals to taste, since this far-stretching art calls into its service all other arts—eloquence, poetry, music, painting, even sculpture by setting the living body into poses and statues. Nor can any doubt its quickening effect on the mind, acting, as Lecky has said 'with equal power upon the opposite extremes of intellect.' The English Secretary of Embassy at Vienna, reporting a few years ago the social condition of the Austrian working classes, said:—

I do not think they are naturally as intelligent as our own working-classes; but what most struck me in my intercourse with them was their superior social refinement and their apparent literary culture. This, I afterwards discovered to be the result of their familiarity with the masterpieces of a *national stage* which includes amongst its most popular dramatists many of the greatest poets and thinkers of Germany.

If we can conceive of English literature without Shakespeare, or of popular education without the actors who have interpreted him to people who have never held in hand his written words, we can form some notion of the space already filled by the drama in the world's mental culture. Nor is its mission yet ended, if we may trust the voice of Professor Palgrave in his recent address at Oxford in praise of poetry :—

The drama stands in a peculiar region midway between prose and verse. But when it is either poetry pure, as at Athens, or mixed, as in the England of Elizabeth and James, whilst the dramatist is faithful to the higher traditions of his art, it yet fulfills its old Aristotelian office of purifying the passions, whilst it brings the past or present before us in an enchanted world of its own, and *adds a charm to poetry itself.*

Also, the drama is capable of being a great factor in morality. Dealing with life as it is lived by human beings like ourselves, moved to the same laughter and tears, thrilled by the same passions, yielding to the same temptations, triumphing over the same obstacles, crushed by the same misfortunes, what other medium can so teach the human heart that knowledge of itself needful to make it strong, earnest, gentle, just, and broad?

> I have heard
> That guilty creatures sitting at a play
> Have by the very cunning of the scene,
> Been struck so to the soul that presently
> They have proclaim'd their malefactions,

says Hamlet. Who can doubt that such things can be or may be? I know that moral purpose is sometimes denied to the drama as to all art. But what drama that has met the approval of men and stood the test of time has not been full of a morality as certain and implacable as nature herself? It is this which has given and kept their hold;

albeit virtue be not always rewarded and vice punished with strict statute regularity.

Again, the drama brings rich stores to the imagination. There is probably no faculty in which people differ in degree more than in this indefinable somewhat that we call imagination,—a noble and precious power, which yet ever seems to flee from men and from races as they increase in knowledge. As nations advance in civilization, they find they must fan the spark to keep it from dying out altogether. Libraries, art-galleries and parks are opened for the people, because it is recognized that intercourse with nature, with good books, with great pictures, stimulates the imagination, makes life brighter by contact with the ideal, and thus elevates national character. But a well-acted play wields a quicker and more universal power than any of these. Lecky is doubtless right in his assertion that it has 'probably done more than any other single agent to produce that craving for the ideal, that enthusiasm of intellect out of which all great works of imagination have sprung.' We shall not care to have our actors emulate the old intensity—for we read of Greek actors who went into convulsions through excess of passion, of a Roman actor who, in the midst of frenzied recitation struck a slave dead;—but there is little danger of such things under our modern intellectual school, with its theory that a great actor, provided he have but enough penetration, may be, indeed must be, without any sensibility whatever.

Since then, our survey of the theatre shows that it has ever had, and still has, a high work to do in the world, what do we find lacking at present for the full accomplishment? Not actors and actresses, for these exist already, adequate in numbers and in genius; not play-houses and scenery, for these are nearly perfect; not audiences, for these are both large and worthy. No, it is the plays themselves that are lacking. It is true the old stores are rich and great; but if we accept that definition of the drama given by its best representative, that it shall show 'the very age and body of the time his form and pressure,' of this we have none or very little. Look at other literatures, French, German, Italian, or Spanish, and we find the names of their greatest imaginative writers and teachers on their

list of playwrights. But in English literature, whether we consider writers on this side the Atlantic or the other, it is not so; and since Sheridan and Goldsmith, scarcely a half-dozen names of distinction appear. We have had, and still have beautiful dramatic poems, such as those of Swinburne, Tennyson, and Browning, while novels have come to be such a favorite form for depicting human life that it has been surmised that if Shakespeare himself had lived in the Victorian age, he would have written novels rather than plays. These things seem to imply that dramatic power is not identical with playwriting power; that each may exist without the other; but that only when both are combined do we get a truly great drama. The writer of plays, however great his genius, must know the practical requirements of the stage before he can become a great dramatist. Brander Matthews says, 'For a poetic play to have a success, it must be the work of one who is both poet and playwright; who is indeed *playwright first*, and poet after'—like Shakespeare, Molière, and many lesser men. The Earl of Lytton says, that 'the best plays result from collaboration,' and that 'the best possible collaboration is that which insensibly results from the unreserved interchange of ideas and knowledge between a great author and a great actor.' Illustrating his theory by selections from the correspondence between Bulwer and Macready during the composition of *Richelieu*, he proves how many times and at how many points the writing was cast and recast, the play remodelled both in plot and in diction by the conference. In the actor, naturally, there was a disposition to subordinate everything to 'stage business,' and to regard the author's work as chiefly a vehicle for that business; in the author, a tendency to underrate the practical requirements and conventions of stagecraft, and to resent 'the tormenting conditions which his art as a dramatist imposed on his genius as a poet.' But, in the end, these claims proved not irreconcilable, and both contributed to the effectiveness of the final result of the play as it now stands.

Such instances, and many others which might be cited, indicate that some sort of collaboration, especially for beginners, is almost indispensable for success; therefore, in any efforts for the creation of

a national drama, a first necessity would seem to be to offer sufficient inducements to attract, not one or two but many men into this field of composition. It must be made conducive both to literary reputation and to pecuniary advantage. The extreme costliness of the modern stage-setting stands as a great obstacle to the proper remuneration of writers. As Mr. Irving has pointed out, the drama 'must thrive as a business before it can flourish as an art.' The running expenses of a first-class theatre, rent, salaries, etc., are seldom less than $4,000 a week; add to this the cost of setting a new piece with appropriate costumes, scenery, etc., and it will be seen how much the manager risks in introducing a new play: the loss, in case of failure, being probably not less than $10,000. Since a manager must invest so much in the decoration of a play, he is apt either to select some old one which is common property, or to pay as little as possible for the new one whose reception by the public is uncertain. Nor can he be expected to do otherwise, or to expend money and incur risk for the pure love of literature or for the sake of elevating popular standards.

To whom, then, should we look for the impetus to set the drama once more in its place among the highest forms in which English thought can utter itself? We have seen that the theatre has ever been, and still is, a powerful shaping force in all that goes to make up national character—the mind, heart and soul of its people; that all the elements necessary to the accomplishment of its high mission exist already, except one, namely, a living school of dramatists worthy of the national literature, and distinctive of the best intellectual features of the age; that these, under present conditions and in the lack of sufficient inducement of any kind, cannot be secured by the private and commercial relations which now alone exist. From what other power can we claim so reasonably the needed support and encouragement as from the power constituted expressly to meet the public needs for which individuals are not competent, namely, The State. This is not a new question; Goethe asked it long ago in *Wilhelm Meister*. Speaking of a play he had just witnessed, Wilhelm says:—

In this little dialogue, we have a lively proof how useful the theatre

might be to all ranks; what advantage the State might procure from it if the occupations, trades and undertakings of men were brought on the stage, and presented on their praiseworthy side, in that point of view in which the State itself should honor and protect them. . . . . Might it not be a worthy and pleasing task for a statesman to survey the natural and reciprocal influence of all classes on each other, and to guide some poet, gifted with sufficient humor, in such labors as these?

Seven years ago a similar question was pressed home to Englishmen by Matthew Arnold, following an engagement of several weeks played in London by the *Comédie Française.* This Society of the French theatre has always been under the patronage of Government, and has traditions reaching back to Louis the Fourteenth. Mr. Arnold, reviewing this history and using for a text the rare performances which had filled him and his countrymen with delight, drew this moral for the Londoners:—

> Forget your clap-trap and believe that the State, the nation in its collective and corporate character, does well to concern itself about an influence so important to national life and manners as the theatre. Form a company out of the materials ready to your hand in your many good actors or actors of promise. Give them Drury Lane Theatre. Let them have a grant from your Science and Art Department; let some intelligent and accomplished man be joined to them as Commissioner from the Department to see that the conditions of the grant are observed. Let the conditions of the grant be that a repertory is agreed upon, taken out of the works of Shakespeare and out of the volumes of the modern British Drama, and that pieces from this repertory are played a certain number of times each season; as to new pieces, let your company use its discretion. . . . . When your institution in the west of London has become a success, plant the second of like kind in the east. The people *will* have the theatre; then make it a good one. Let your two or three chief provincial towns institute with municipality subsidy and co-operation theatres such as you institute in the metropolis, with State subsidy and co-operation. So you will restore the English theatre, and then a modern drama of your own will also, probably, spring up.

Mutatis mutandis, is not this sound and practicable advice for our own country? It is the boast of America that she makes ample provision for all academies for the people. If we count these to be politics, schools, the lyceum, the press, the church, how can we deny a similar place to the theatre? Important as is each of these in its sphere, yet

all demand greater powers of serious attention than very many people can exercise. If we can do without this great school of enthusiasm of mind, sympathy of heart, and much-embracing imagination, we shall furnish the first instance in history of a great nation destitute of a national drama and neglecting to foster this powerful instrument for the nation's weal.

ANNA B. MCMAHAN.

Quincy, Ill.

SHAKESPEARE AT SCHOOL.

ON a May morning in 1571 we may imagine young William Shakespeare wending his way for the first time to the Stratford Grammar School. If he was born on the 23d of April, 1564 (or May 3d, according to our present calendar), he had now reached the age of seven years, at which he could enter the school. The only other requirement for admission, in the case of a Stratford boy, was that he should be able to read; and this he had probably learned at home with the aid of a 'horn-book,' such as he afterwards referred to in *Love's Labour's Lost*, V, i, 49: 'Yes, yes; he teaches boys the horn-book. What is a, b, spelt backward, with the horn on its head?'

This primer of our forefathers, which continued in common use down to the middle of the last century at least, was a single leaf, usually set in a frame of wood and covered with a thin plate of transparent horn, from which it got its name. There was generally a handle to hold it by, and through a hole in the handle a cord was put by which the 'book' was slung to the girdle of the scholar. In a book printed in 1731 we read of 'a child, in a boddice coat and leading-strings, with a horn-book tied to her side.' In 1715 we find mention of the price of a horn-book as two-pence. The leaf had at the top the alphabet large and small, with perhaps a list of the vowels and a string of easy monosyllables of the *ab, eb, ib* sort, and a copy of the

Lord's Prayer. The matter varied somewhat from time to time. The alphabet was prefaced by a cross, whence it came to be called the Christ Cross Row, corrupted into 'criss-cross-row' or contracted into 'cross-row'; as in *Richard III:* I, i, 55, where Clarence says:—

> He harkens after prophecies and dreams,
> And from the cross-row plucks the letter G,
> And says a wizard told him that by G
> His issue disinherited should be.

Shenstone alludes to the horn-book in *The Schoolmistress:*—

> Their books of stature small they take in hand,
> Which with pellucid horn secured are,
> To save from fingers wet the letters fair.

Possibly, young William, instead of a horn-book, had an 'A-B-C book,' which often contained a catechism, in addition to the elementary reading matter. To this we have an allusion in *King John*, I, i, 196:—

> Now your traveller—
> He and his toothpick at my worship's mess,
> And when my knightly stomach is sufficed,
> Why then I suck my teeth and catechise
> My picked man of countries: 'My dear Sir,'—
> Thus, leaning on my elbow, I begin,—
> 'I shall beseech you'—that is question now;
> And then comes answer like an Absey book, etc.

It was not a long walk that our seven-year-old boy had to take in going to school. Turning the corner of Henley Street, where his father's house is still to be seen, he passes into the High Street, on which (though the street changes its name twice before we get there) is the Guild Hall where the school is kept. It adjoins the Guild Chapel, originally erected in 1269 but rebuilt in the latter half of the 15th century; and the chapel is separated only by a narrow lane from the 'great house,' as it was called, the handsomest in all Stratford. The child, as he passes that grand mansion, little dreams that, some twenty-five years hence, he will buy it for his own residence.

The school-room is in the upper story of the Guild Hall, and probably looks much the same to-day as it did when William studied

there, except that the plastered ceiling may have replaced or hidden the oak roof of the olden time. The wainscotted walls, with the small windows high above the floor, are evidently ancient. An old desk, which may have been the master's, and a few rude forms, or benches, are now the only furniture; for the school was long since removed to ampler and more convenient quarters. A desk, said with no authority whatever to have been used by Shakespeare when at school, is preserved in the museum at the Henley Street house.

What did William study in the Grammar School? Not much except arithmetic and Latin, with perhaps a little Greek and a smattering of other branches. His first lessons in Latin, Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps tells us, were probably 'derived from two well-known books of the time, the *Accidence* and the *Sententiæ Pueriles*. From the first of these works the improvised examination of Master Page in the *Merry Wives of Windsor** is so almost verbally remembered that one might imagine that the William of the scene was a resuscitation of the poet at school. Recollections of the same book are to be traced in other of his plays. The *Sententiæ Pueriles* was, in all probability, the little manual by the aid of which he first learned to construe Latin, for in one place, at least, he all but literally translates a brief passage, and there are in his plays several adaptations of its sentiments.' This book was sold for a penny (equivalent to about twenty-five cents in our day) and contains a collection of brief sentences from many authors, including moral and religious paragraphs intended for the use of the boys on Saints' Days. The Latin Grammar studied by Shakespeare was certainly Lilly's, the standard manual of the time. In the *Taming of the Shrew*, I, i, 167, we have a passage from Terence quoted in the form in which it appears in that Grammar: 'Redime te captum quam queas minimo;' the original Latin being: 'Quid agas, nisi ut te redimas captum,' etc. There are certain people, by the way, who believe that Shakespeare's plays were written by Lord Bacon. Can we imagine the sage of St. Albans, familiar as he was with classical literature, going to his old Latin Grammar for

*See the 1st scene of act iv. where Evans meets Mistress Page with her son William. The passage is too long for quotation here, but the reader, if not familiar with it, will be well repaid for looking it up.

a quotation from Terence, and not to the works of that famous playwright?

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV, ii, 95, Holofernes quotes the 'good old Mantuan,' as he calls him, thus: 'Fauste, precor gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra Ruminat.' This is also a reminiscence of his school Latin. The 'Mantuan' is not Virgil, as one might at first suppose, but Baptista Mantuanus, or Giovanni Battista Spagnuoli (or Spagnoli), who got the name Mantuanus from his birth-place. He was the author of sundry *Eclogues*, which the pedants of Shakespeare's day preferred to Virgil's, and which were much read in schools The 1st Eclogue begins with the passage quoted by Holofernes.

How William liked going to school we do not know, but if we are to judge from his references to schoolboys and schoolmasters he had little taste for it. In *As You Like It*, II, vii, 145, we have the familiar picture of

> . . . . the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
> And shining morning face, creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school;

and in *Romeo and Juliet*, II, ii, 156, the significant similes:—

> Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books,
> But love from love, toward school with heavy looks.

Gremio, in the *Taming of the Shrew*, III, ii, 149, when asked if he has come from the church, replies: 'As willingly as e'er I came from school.' And the pedagogues of the dramatist are all pedants, whom he delights to ridicule. Such are Holofernes and Evans, already referred to, and worse than either, Pinch in the *Comedy of Errors*, V, i, 237, who is something of a conjurer withal:—

> . . . one Pinch, a hungry lean-faced villain,
> A mere anatomy, a mountebank,
> A threadbare juggler, and a fortune-teller,
> A needy, hollow-eyed, sharp-looking wretch,
> A living dead man.

Sooth to say, the schoolmasters of that day were not likely to be remembered with much favor by their pupils in after years. 'Whereas they make one schollar, they marre ten,' says Peacham, who tells

of one pedagogue who used to whip his boys of a cold morning 'for no other purpose than to get himself a heate.' Some of the grammars of the time have on the title-page the suggestive woodcut of 'an awful man sitting on a high chair, pointing to a book with his right hand, but with a mighty rod in his left.' Lilly's Grammar, on the other hand, has the picture of a huge fruit-tree, with little boys in its branches picking the abundant produce. We hope the urchins did not find this more suggestive of stealing apples than of gathering the rich fruit of the tree of knowledge within.

But we must not linger on young Shakespeare's schooldays. It is doubtful whether they lasted more than six years, or until he was about thirteen. In 1577 his father was beginning to have bad luck, and the boy very likely had to be taken from school for work of some sort—we do not know what. As Ben Jonson says, he had 'small Latin and less Greek'—perhaps none—and this was probably due to his leaving the Grammar School before the average age.

W. J. Rolfe.

HENRY IV.

IN both parts of *Henry IV*, the salient event is the Rebellion of the North. It could not have been played upon the stage without reminding the audience of the rising in 1569, associated with Shakespeare's earliest recollections; he was then between five and six years old. . . . In Henry's day there were three risings in the north; first under Hotspur; then under the Archbishop; lastly, three years later, under Northumberland and Bardolph. These three risings the poet reduces to two, by making the third a mere episode of the second, and he thoroughly misrepresents the second, with which in reality Northumberland had nothing to do, for he had been reconciled to the king and restored to most of his dignities in 1404. It was not till long after the Archbishop's death that he rebelled again and was slain.

By this unhistorical manipulation the two risings are made in one respect very like the two wars in *John*—the first secular in its motives; the second resting mainly for its support on ecclesiastical influences. It was supposed all through Elizabeth's reign that a double treasonable movement like this was going on. One of its phases was political only, aiming at deposing Elizabeth as illegitimate, substituting the Queen of Scots, and restoring the nobility to their old privileges. When the English fugitives of 1569 represented themselves as religious confessors and maintainers of the Pope's authority, Burghley declared their assertion to be false, and an after-thought. But it was different with the second phase of the rebellion; this indeed never came to a head, but it was ever living in the imaginations of the counsellors, and terrified them to the enactment of more and more grievous penal laws. This two-fold view of the rebellion is described by Morton to Northumberland, *2 Henry IV;* I, 189:—

> The gentle Archbishop of York is up,
> . . . .
> Who with a double surety binds his followers.

Hotspur had 'but shadows and the show of men to fight,' for the word 'rebellion' divided their minds, so that he had only their bodies—

> but for their spirit and souls,
> This word 'rebellion' it had froze them up,
> As fish are in a pond. But now the Bishop
> Turns insurrection to religion;
> . . . .
> He's followed both with body and with mind,
> And doth enlarge his rising with the blood.
> Of fair King Richard scraped from Pomfret stones,
> Derives from heaven his quarrel and his cause,
> Tells them he doth bestride a bleeding land
> Gasping for life under great Bolingbroke,
> And more and less do flock to follow him.

This was the case in the sixteenth century. Before and during 1659 the word 'rebellion' froze up the souls of the malcontents and isolated the northern earls with their immediate following. Then came the ex-communication of Pius V, in 1570, and the sentence of Sextus in 1588, denouncing Elizabeth's extortions and wrongs

against her subjects, her aid to foreign rebels, and entertainment of fugitives, her dealings with the Turk to invade Christendom, her persecution of Catholics, her slaughter of the Queen of Scots, her debasement of the ancient nobility and promotion of obscure persons. The Pope turned insurrection to religion, and enlarged the rising with the blood of fair Queen Mary, scraped from Fotheringay. Sanders excuses the remissness of the Catholics in joining the rising of 1569, by the fact that they had not been authentically informed of the ex-communication of the Queen. The fact was whispered, agents came from Rome to England to certify it, but the sentence was not officially published, and therefore the Catholics treated it as a nullity. Sanders, perhaps to magnify the Papal influence, treats the rebellion of 1569 as a consequence of the Bull of Feb. 1570, which Camden, perhaps explaining Sanders, tells us was secretly communicated the year before to a few, among whom Bishop Jewell, by some means, got possession of a copy. Sanders, however, says the rising failed because the Bull was not published. 'By this denunciation many men of rank were led to think of delivering their brethren in firm hope of the assistance' of all Catholics. The matter failed because all Catholics knew not as yet that Elizabeth was declared a heretic. But the intention of these men was laudable. Burghley's comment on all this is, 'the cause why the rebels prevailed not, was because all Catholics had not been duly informed that the Queen was a heretic.' Which want of information, *to make the rebels mightier in numbers and power*, was diligently and cunningly supplied by the sending into the realm of a great multitude of Seminaries and Jesuits, whose special charge was to inform the people thereof. For years after, Burghley treated one great English party as in a state of chronic rebellion, always ready to break out, and always requiring the most vigilant repression.

Shakespeare fills up his vivid story of the rising with so many life-like details of his own—such as the character of Hotspur, the perfumed lord, with his pounce-box, the letter from the 'dish of skimmed milk,' and the indecision and imbecility of the Earl—that we might suppose him to have worked up materials he had gathered in London

from some one who had a part in the rebellion. One of the Percies, Sir Charles, was settled at Dumbleton, in Gloucestershire, in the neighborhood of Stratford, and in a letter of 1601, speaks familiarly of himself as Justice Shallow. This man, who refers to these very plays, may have furnished some of the matter of *Henry IV.*

The story of Falstaff and his fellows is a creation of the poet, admirably echoing the moral of the serious part of the drama, according to the poet's method of managing his double plots. A statist, says Fitzherbert (*Religion and Policy*, I, c. 30, No. 29), must avoid all unlawful employment in any wickedness for his prince's service. For he will never be trusted after, however satisfactory his service is in the present. And the example he gives is, 'Henry V, presently after his father's death banished from the court all such as had been counsellors, instruments or companions of his riots before.' This note is first struck in *Richard II* in the King's prophecy to Northumberland:

> Thou shalt think,
> Though he divide the realm and give thee half,
> It is too little, helping him to all:
> And he shall think that thou who knew'st the way
> To plant unrightful kings, wilt know again
> To pluck him headlong from the usurped throne.
> The love of wicked men converts to fear,
> That fear to hate, and hate turns one or both
> To worthy danger and deserved death.

The two parts of *Henry IV* are the fulfillment of this prophecy. In the first part Worcester says:—

> ——Bear ourselves as even as we can,
> The King will always think him in our debt,
> And think we think ourselves unsatisfied,
> Till he hath found a time to pay us home.
> . . . . . .
> Look how we can, or sad or merrily,
> Interpretation will misquote our looks.

In the second part Mowbray dissuades the Archbishop from reconciliation by the argument,—

> Our valuation shall be such
> That every slight and false devised cause,

> Yea, every idle, nice, and wanton reason,
> Shall to the King taste of this action.

And the dying King to his son:—

> [The crown] seemed in me
> But as an honour snatched with boisterous hand,
> And I had many living to upbraid
> My gain of it with their assistances
> Which daily grew to quarrel and to bloodshed.

If men love the treason they hate the traitor, and suspect that he who has been false to one will be false to another. So Lewis justifies his treachery to the English nobles in *King John;* so Othello begins to suspect Desdemona because she had been false to her father. Cleopatra tempts Antony to be false to Fulvia, and mistrusts him forever. And Parolles shows that no man after being false to his friends can serve any honest use.

This constant prominence of the law which fatally conducts traitors to punishment, is in the plays modified by a large-hearted sympathy with their grievances and temptations. It is so in the Roman plays —Brutus and Coriolanus are instances. In *Cymbeline,* Belarius deserves ill by doing well, is driven to treason by being beaten for loyalty, and learns how '*il perd souvent d'avoir trop bien servi.*' In *King John,* Salisbury exhibits the struggle between patriotism and rebellion.

In a modern play all this would be without special political meaning. At the time of the landing of William III, or during the struggle for American independence, it would have been alive with meaning. So it was in Shakespeare's days. Then the English visitor to Spanish Flanders might see troops of his unhappy countrymen, gentlemen, many of them, of good houses, wandering in poor habits and pallid faces, debarred from returning to their country, daily overlooked by the proud eyes of disdainful Spaniards, in whose comfortless service they were perishing without relief or pity. A pamphlet, of 1593, attributed to Lewkhor, tells of the atrocious cruelty used towards them by their hard masters, who knew that there was no return for them to the land they had left, often from the purest mo-

tives of religion and right. To swell this wretched company, young men were daily being seduced from England, some by the Spaniolated English, who based their hopes on a Spanish succession to the crown, some by their own restless desire of glory, and their sentimental preference of the Hidalgo of Spain to the beer-brewing and basket-making Dutchmen. Some again, because they could not live at peace in England, but were continually troubled by informers and pursuivants and meddling justices, about their attendance at church. The temptation was great; quite important enough to deserve the poetical disuasive it obtained in *King John* and the two parts of *Henry VI.*—R. Simpson in *The New Shakspere Society's Transactions* (I, 1874).

A School of Shakespeare.

For his bounty,
There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping.
—*Antony & Cleopatra*, V, ii, 86.

1 AND 2 HENRY IV.

THE popularity of Henry IV upon his accession to the throne seems to have been equalled only by the unpopularity of Richard II. From the time of his banishment as Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby, in 1398, till his return the next year as duke of Lancaster, to claim his inheritance, the tide rose so steadily and rapidly in his favor that he seems to be carried up the steps of the throne almost without effort. History presents him to us much as Shakespeare has drawn his character.—Bold, far-seeing, determined, self-contained, untiring in action as in waiting, a good dissimulator, a good judge of other men's characters, ready to crook the pregnant hinges of the knee, prompt to stake all upon the perilous edge of battle, not without a generous vein of chivalric ardor and

kindliness nor a common-sense appreciation of the righteousness of justice, together with a towering ambition and a dauntless self-reliance —before 'such a compact, close-knit, sure-footed structure as Bolingbroke, it is no wonder that Richard's brittle, stumbling, loose-jointed fabric soon goes to pieces,' well says Mr. Hudson: nor is it surprising that the various rebellions during Henry's reign tried in vain to push him from his seat.

Froissart describes him to us as a 'young and handsome knight' who had already ridden far, knight-errant fashion, and seen much; and Warton (*History of English Poetry*, p. xvii.) thinks Chaucer may have him in mind and mean to turn a dextrous compliment in naming the places visited by the knight in the *Canterbury Tales*. Froissart speaks of his banishment as follows, putting into the mouths of his talkers, noble or plebeian, sentiments characteristic of the age:—

The sentence was satisfactory to the lords present who said, 'The Earl of Derby may readily go two or three years and amuse himself in foreign parts, for he is young enough; and although he has already travelled to Prussia, the Holy Sepulchre, Cairo, and St. Catherine's (the Monastery on Mount Sinai), he will find other places to visit: He has two sisters, Queen's of Castille and Portugal, and may cheerfully pass his time with them. The lords, knights, and squires of these countries will make him welcome, for at this moment all warfare is at an end. On his arrival in Castille, as he is very active, he may put them in motion, and lead them against the infidels of Grenada, which will employ his time better than remaining idle in England. Or he may go to Hainault, where his cousin and brother in arms, the Count D'Ostrevault, will be happy to see him and gladly entertain him, that he may assist him in his war against the Frieslanders. If he go to Hainault, he can have frequent intelligence from his own country and children. He therefore cannot fail of doing well whithersoever he goes; and the king may speedily recall him, through means of the good friends he will leave behind, for he is the finest feather in his cap; and he must not therefore suffer him to be too long absent, if he wish to gain the love of his subjects. The earl-marshal has had hard treatment, for he is banished without hope of ever being recalled; but, to say the truth he has deserved it, for all this mischief has been caused by him and his foolish talking: he must therefore pay for it.' Thus conversed many English knights with each other, the day the king passed sentence on the Earl of Derby and the earl-marshal.—Vol. IV. C. 95.

The day the Earl of Derby mounted his horse to leave London, upward of forty thousand men were in the streets, bitterly lamenting his departure.

Ah, gentle earl! will you then quit us? This country will never be happy until your return, and the days until then will be insufferably long. Through envy, treachery and fear, are you driven out of a kingdom where you are more worthy to reside than those who caused it. You are of such high birth and gallantry that none other can be compared to you. Why then will you leave us, gentle earl? You have never done wrong by thought or deed, and are incapable of so doing.' Thus did men and women so piteously complain that it was grievous to hear them.—*Ibid.* C. 96.

Speaking of the dissatisfaction in England against Richard II, after the death of John of Gaunt, and of the intrigue whereby Richard broke off the proposed marriage between the Earl of Derby and the daughter of the Duke of Berry, Froissart has the following, admirably illustrative of the temper and thought of the times:—

Whatever misfortune fate has decreed cannot be prevented; they must have their course, and those that befel King Richard are wonderful indeed to think on. He might have avoided them, but what must be will be. I, John Froissart, author of these chronicles, will literally say what, in my younger days, I heard at a mansion called Berkhampstead, distant from London thirty miles, and which, at the time I am speaking of, in the year of our Lord 1361, belonged to the Prince of Wales, father to King Richard. As the prince and princess were about to leave England for Aquitaine to hold their state, the King of England, Queen Philippa, my mistress, the Dukes of Clarence, Lancaster, the Lord Edmund, who was afterward Earl of Cambridge, and Duke of York, with their children, came to this mansion to visit the prince and take leave of him. I was at that time twenty-four years old, and one of the clerks of the chamber to my lady the queen. During this visit, as I was seated on a bench, I heard the following conversation from a knight to some of the ladies of the queen. He said: 'There was in that country a book called Brut which many say contains the prophecies of Merlin. According to its contents, neither the Prince of Wales nor Duke of Clarence, though sons to King Edward, will wear the crown of England, but it will fall to the house of Lancaster.' When the knight said this the Earl of Derby was not born; his birth was seven years after. This prophecy, however, was verified, for I have since seen Henry, Earl of Derby, King of England. —*Ibid.* cap. 103.*

Prophecies after the fact are not so hard, even nowadays. This account of the coronation of Henry, however, does not involve the good old chronicler's prophetic powers, and is probably as reliable as interesting:—

The whole cavalcade amounted to six thousand horse, which escorted the duke from the Tower to Westminster. That same night the duke bathed, and on the morrow confessed himself, as he had good need to do, and according to his custom heard three masses. The prelates and clergy who had been assembled then came in a large body in procession from Westminster Abbey to conduct the king thither, and returned in the same manner, the king and his lords following them. The dukes, earls and barons wore long scarlet robes, with mantles trimmed with ermine, and large hoods of the same. The dukes and earls had three bars of ermine on the left arm a quarter of a yard long, or thereabout, the barons had but two. All the knights and squires had uniform cloaks of scarlet lined with minever. In the procession to the church the duke had borne over his head a rich canopy of blue silk supported on silver staves, with four golden bells that rang at the corners, by four burgesses of Dover, who claimed it as their right. On each side of him were the sword of mercy and the sword of justice; the first was borne by the Prince of Wales, and the other by the Earl of Northumberland, constable of England, for the Earl of Rutland had been dismissed. The Earl of Westmoreland, marshal of England, carried the sceptre. The procession entered the church about nine o'clock; in the middle of which was a scaffold covered with crimson cloth, and in the centre, a royal throne of cloth of gold. When the duke entered the church he seated himself on the throne, and was thus in regal state, except having the crown on his head. The Archbishop of Canterbury proclaimed from the four corners of the scaffold how God had given them a man for their lord and sovereign, and then asked the people if they were consenting to his being consecrated and crowned king. They unanimously shouted out 'Ay!' and held up their hands, promising fealty and homage. After this the duke descended from his throne, and advanced to the altar to be consecrated. This ceremony was performed by two archbishops and ten bishops. He was stripped of all his royal state before the altar, naked to his shirt, and was then anointed and consecrated at six places, that is to say, on the head, the breast, the two shoulders, before and behind, on the back and hands; they then placed a bonnet on his head, and, while this was doing, the clergy chanted the litany, or the service that is performed to hallow a font. The king was now dressed in a churchman's clothes like a deacon, and they put on him shoes of crimson velvet, after the manner of a prelate. Then they added spurs with a point but no rowel, and the sword of justice was drawn, blessed, and delivered to the king, who put it into the scabbard, when the Archbishop of Canterbury girded it about him. The crown of St. Edward, which is arched over like a cross, was next brought and blessed and placed by the archbishop on the king's head. When mass was over, the king left the church and returned to the palace in the same state as before. There was in the court-yard a fountain that constantly

ran with white and red wine from various mouths. The king went first to his closet, and then returned to the hall to dinner. At the first table sat the king, at the second the five great peers of England, at the third the principal citizens of London, at the fourth the new-created knights, at the fifth all knights and squires of honor. The king was served by the Prince of Wales, who carried the sword of mercy, and on the opposite side, by the constable, who bore the sword of justice. At the bottom of the table was the Earl of Westmoreland with the sceptre. There were only at the king's table the two archbishops and seventeen bishops. When dinner was half over, a knight of the name of Dymock entered the hall completely armed, and mounted on a handsome steed, richly barbed with crimson housings. The knight was armed for wager of battle, and was preceded by another knight bearing his lance; he himself had his drawn sword in one hand, and his naked dagger by his side. The knight presented the king with a written paper, the contents of which were, that if any knight or gentleman should dare to maintain that King Henry was not a lawful sovereign, he was ready to offer him combat in the presence of the king, when and where he should be pleased to appoint. The king ordered this challenge to be proclaimed by heralds in six different parts of the town and the hall, to which no answer was made. . . . Thus passed the coronation day of King Henry, who remained that and the ensuing day at the palace of Westminster.

* The following further extract from Froissart forms an excellent appendix to the preceding, and is also something of a commentary on Falstaff's lion's instinct (1 *Henry IV; II, iv*).

'I heard of a singular circumstance that happened, which I must mention. King Richard had a greyhound called Math, beautiful beyond measure, who would not notice nor follow anyone but the king. Whenever the king rode abroad the greyhound was loosed by the person who had him in charge, and ran instantly to caress him, by placing his two fore feet on his shoulders. It fell out that as the king and the Duke of Lancaster were conversing in the court of the castle (Conroy Castle), their horses being ready for them to mount, the greyhound was untied, but, instead of running as usual to the king, he left him and leaped to the Duke of Lancaster's shoulders, paying him every court, and caressing him as he was formerly used to caress the king. The duke, not acquainted with this greyhound, asked the king the meaning of this fondness, saying, "What does this mean?" "Cousin," replied the king, "it means a great deal for you, and very little for me." "How?" said the duke, "pray explain it." "I understand it," answered the king, "that this greyhound fondles and pays his court to you this day as King of England, which you will surely be, and I shall be deposed, for the natural instinct of the dog shows it to him. Keep him, therefore, by your side, for he will now leave me and follow you." The Duke of Lancaster treasured up what the king had said, and paid attention to the greyhound, who would never more follow Richard of Bordeaux, but kept by the side of the Duke of Lancaster, as was witnessed by thirty thousand men.'—*Ib. cap.* 112.

A splendid sight it must have been, and we may well doubt whether it was surpassed by the coronation of George IV, in 1821, so

graphically described by Sir Walter Scott (see Lockhart's Life of Scott, Vol. V. Chap. IV.), upon which occasion also a young Dymocke was the challenger or champion, and hurt Sir Walter's antiquarian feelings on using a 'round rondache, or Highland target,' instead of 'a three-corner'd or *heater-shield,* which in time of the tilt was suspended round the neck.'

The value to the history of civilization of the picture or illustration drawn by Froissart is as much superior to the pageant described by Sir Walter as fact is superior to semblance. Everything about the coronation of Henry, the long procession, the gorgeous robes, the stripping of the king to the nakedness of his shirt, the steel-clad challenger, the sturdy London burgesses, the mitred bishops—all these were parts, in a certain sense, essential parts of the thing of which they were the sign, the natural outgrowth of their civilization; while the whole splendid pageant of George IV's coronation was a pageant essentially, a desirable one doubtless, but not representative of the civilization of 1821.

Gay young Dymocke could prance harmless and unharmed in 1821, because the *law,* of which his grim ancestor, naked sword in hand, was the representative in 1399, had become the undisputed prerogative of the nation; the London alderman could swallow their venison and turtle in 1821, sitting comfortably on the same spot probably where their stout forefathers had eaten their coronation dinner four and a quarter centuries before, because those forefathers could be thus described by the courtly Froissart:—

For (the English) are the worst people in the world, the most obstinate and presumptuous; and of all England the Londoners are the leaders, for to say the truth, they are very powerful in men and in wealth. In the city and neighborhood, there are twenty-four thousand men, completely armed from head to foot, and full thirty thousand archers. This is a great force, and they are bold and courageous; and the more blood is spilt, the greater their courage.—Book IV. chap. 113.

Have men ever gotten any great good in government without fighting for it, or kept it without being ready to fight for it on short notice?

By an act of the fifth of this reign it is made felony to cut out any person's tongue, or put out his eyes; crimes which the act says were very

frequent. This savage spirit of revenge denotes a barbarous people; though, perhaps, it was increased by the prevailing factions and civil commotions.—Hume's *History*, chap. XVIII.

By the provisions of the Statute of Heretics (1401) 'a refusal to abjure, or a relapse after abjuration, enabled [the bishops] to hand over the heretic to the civil officers and by these . . . he was to be burned on a high place before the people. The statute was hardly passed before William Sawtre, who had quitted a Norfolk rectory to spread the new Lollardism, became its first victim.'—Green's *Short History*, chap. V. § VI.

What amazing things, fortunately, those two statutes are to us!

The two parts of *Henry IV* constitute one of the finest of the Shakespearian dramas. The variety of character is astonishing, and yet there is no great female character portrayed. Dame Quickly reminds us of the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet;* Lady Percy suggests both Imogen and Rosalind, perhaps, but she is the equal of neither. The discussions of the principal characters by Dowden (*Shakespeare: his Mind and Art*), Hudson (*Life, Art and Characters of Shakespeare*), and Gervinus (*Shakespeare Commentaries*), are very interesting. Very instructive, too, is the comparison of Henry IV with Macbeth. They are both ambitious usurpers: Macbeth has no spur but vaulting ambition; Henry has behind him the moral sense of the people, and just private claims: Macbeth plunges from crime to crime to preserve himself; Henry descends to unjust, crimeful expedients of policy, but to save the State as well as himself; Macbeth, untrue to himself in the very beginning, ends by becoming heartlessly untrue to his wife, guilty and suffering for his sake, the only creature left to love him; Henry, never really false to himself, ends surrounded by his sons and his officers of state, and reconciled to Prince Hal, of whom he doubted most: Macbeth dies desperate, fighting like a beast in the toils: Henry dies comforted and in the Jerusalem chamber, having attained, as it were, the sanction and reward of the long-contemplated crusade for which his knight-errant soul yearned: both men deteriorate in character, Macbeth hopelessly so—his life was for himself: Henry not beyond excuse—his life was for the State and society as well as for himself: both men have expressed in words that are immortal the longing for rest that comes to the uneasy soul, and the

insufficiency of pomp or power to make amends for wrongs done to conscience. (*Macbeth*, II, ii; III, ii; V, v: *1 Henry IV:* I, i: *2 Henry IV:* III, i; IV, v.) Of Prince Hal and Hotspur and Falstaff, so much has been so well written that but little need be here said. They stand in a sort of whimsical inverse moral and intellectual relation to one another. Hotspur is, so to speak, an aspiration; honor as he conceives it is his breath and being; not to be known and praised as Hotspur—he would rather not be at all. Prince Hal has also a profound desire for honor, but not merely as Hotspur conceives it; his desire is governed by strong common sense; it is the deed he craves, and not the name of doing it; it is enough for him to know within himself that he is capable; his intense pride and self-respect scorns the 'bubble reputation,' but not the fact underlying it. Falstaff's selfish intellect despises honor, both name and deed, which can neither heal a wound in his fat paunch, nor refresh him in the absence of good sherris sack. On the other hand, Hotspur, though not deficient in intelligence, does not see clearly what he is doing because of his predominant mood; Prince Henry, in the clear light of common sense, sees everything and everybody just as they are; Falstaff is intellectually a giant, and, as far as his sympathies go, shows the discursive mind of Hamlet. He is limited by lack of moral nature; he has no morals to speak of; his God is his belly, and his belly is so big that he has no room for any bowels of righteousness; his conscience has all gone to kidney, and no longer disturbs him. He is well-nigh as subtle as Hamlet, as witty as Mercuti, as quaint as Touchstone; he is Falstaff. But he is all wrong; he must bring down his own punishment, and when it does come, it is irretrievable.

Gervinus institutes something of a comparison between Prince Henry and Bassanio, and it is one which may be followed with interest and profit; not less on this account perhaps than on others, that the characters in *Henry IV* all seem to underrate the Prince, but the reader feels his real worth, and estimates him more justly all the while, whereas in the *Merchant of Venice* all the characters esteem as well as estimate Bassanio at his real worth, while most readers seem to undervalue him. Is Shakespeare, as well as Antonio and Gratiano

and Launcelot and the large-souled Portia, wrong about this handsome, elegant young 'Venetian, a scholar and a soldier,' or are some of us wrong? Would Portia be the woman to mistake the man of her choice?

For the condition of contemporary Europe see the histories of Green, Hallam, Gibbon, Hume, Gairdner's *Houses of Lancaster and York* (*Epochs of History Series*). See also *Chevy Chase* and the *Battle of Otterbourne* in Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry;* Ellis's *Early English Poetry;* Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great; Canterbury Chimes, or Chaucer Tales Retold,* with its quaint illustrations.

WM. TAYLOR THOM.

Shakespeare Societies.

> Such a holy witch
> That he enchants societies into him;
> Half all men's hearts are his. —*Cymbeline*, I, vi, 166.

MONTREAL SHAKESPEARE CLUB.—Feb. 7th.—Essay Night.—Subject: *King Richard III.*—(1) Mr. C. A. Duclos read the 'Introductory Sketch,' in which after some general remarks he maintained the magnificence of the dramatic conception of Richard. He was too great a character to be regarded as a mere villain. Grandly selfish, he compelled our admiration like Milton's Satan. His great insight into the human heart was exhibited in his dialogue with the Lady Anne, in which Richard wins her by concentrating her thoughts upon himself, by causing her to hate him intensely, knowing well that hate is nearer to love than is indifference. (2) The Rev. Dr. Norman (an honorary member) in his 'Sidelights upon *Richard III*' took a very favorable view of the play. He considered Richard to have been the original of Milton's Satan; held that the scene of Anne's wooing was open to criticism; and that the play itself was admirable, not only for its high moral tone, but because it always took well with the gods. (3) Mr. E.

Lafleur contributed a paper upon Richard III. His age was a reign of terror and Richard himself its consummate incarnation. He is already a fully developed villain in *3 Henry VI*, his evil nature being in part the result of physical deformity. Still his character is so drawn (the reader here compared the play with Byron's *Deformed Transformed*) that we feel no sympathy with Richard. Like Iago and Macbeth, Richard is an intellectual character; but Richard's intelligence is of a practical nature, that of Macbeth is philosophical, of Iago, cynical. Richard's career compares best with that of Macbeth; but Macbeth is partly led on by the witches, and in Macbeth there is a conflict of conscience. Richard's inner life is more like Iago's with a difference. If both are cynical sceptics, Richard is a Frederick, Iago a Voltaire. Again Richard is rapid and unreflective in action; while Iago acts leisurely, taking an æsthetic pleasure in his victims' tortures. The paper concluded with a comparison of the deaths of the three villains. After (4) 'Some Remarks upon the Play' by Mr. W. R. Millar, in which he accepted the opening soliloquy as true to nature and dwelt on Queen Margaret's troubled career, (5) the Secretary (Mr. R. W. Boodle) read a note upon '*Richard III* and the *True Tragedy of King Richard*.' After contrasting Shakespeare's play with the early chronicle play, the reader distinguished between the tragedy of character and the tragedy of destiny, of which latter the present play was a well-marked type. The vitality of the tragedy of destiny, including at one extreme Æschylus's *Agamemnon*, at the other George Eliot's *Spanish Gipsy*—was insisted upon.

Meeting of March 21st.—Essay Night.—Subject: *Troilus and Cressida*.—(1) The 'Introductory Essay' was read by the Secretary (Mr. R. W. Boodle), who, by tracing the pedigree of the Trojan story through the main mediæval authorities upon the subject, showed that, like Heywood in his *Iron Age*, Shakespeare had merely told it as he found it. The Trojan bias was inherited, and there was no conscious attempt to burlesque the Homeric account. It was doubtful whether Shakespeare had ever read Chapman's translation, and we find the Trojan story given in outline in the *Rape of Lucrece* very much as it is in the play. The graft of the love episode of Troilus

and Cressida upon the ancient legend was characteristically mediæval and should be compared with the story of Pelleas and Ettarre in the Arthurian legend. In answer to the questions, how the play was to be classified, and in what mood it was written, the essayist considered it to be a cry from the Aleian plain, upon which Shakespeare was then wandering, like Bellerophon, 'devouring his own soul.' The essay concluded with a discussion of the personalities supposed to be traced in the play. The character of Ajax was the 'purge' given by Shakespeare to Ben Jonson, and for different reasons the reader believed Thersites to be intended for Marston rather than Dekker. (2) Mr. E. W. Arthy next contributed an essay upon 'Cressids.' The phase of character depicted in Cressida was rather Elizabethan than Homeric or Hellenic. In the heroic as well as in the classical period, such a character would have been impossible. The absence of fixed rule of conduct apart from the sense of the beautiful, the Hellenic belief in the Divine as prompting strong feeling, and the high admiration for mere physical charm—all these resulted in great freedom of relations between the sexes, paralleled only by the Italy of the Renaissance, though even here conduct that was natural to the Greek became defiant and morbid in one over whom the influence of Christianity had passed. (3) Mr. A. D. Nicolls read upon 'Shakespeare's Heroes Regarded from the Point of View of Courage.' After quoting Aristotle's definition, the essayist reviewed the different heroes of the play by the light of it. Ajax's courage was merely physical, Agamemnon a leader of men, Ulysses remarkable for intellectual qualities; even though Achilles possessed great fighting qualities, he was despicable. Hector alone in this play comes near to our idea of courage. (4) Mr. N. T. Rielle then concluded the evening with a paper entitled 'Thersites,' whom he considered to be subjectively the embodiment of Shakespeare's mental development at a certain stage—that of maturity of mind, looking at life from a pessimistic standpoint, the result of satiety and vanished youth. From this point of view, as representing a stage of his creator's mental growth, Thersites reminded the reader of V. Hugo's Valjean, just as from another point of view *Troilus and Cressida* might be called Shakespeare's *Sappho;* the spiritual is here

conquered by the earthly: realism, materialism, and pessimism reign supreme, as in French literature at the present moment. In Shakespeare this was but a passing phase, which he was enabled to conquer by going back to his early beliefs and his country life.

The February Meeting of the New York Shakespeare Society.—The society met at Hamilton Hall, Columbia College, New York, February 24th, the President, Appleton Morgan, Esq., in the chair. Le Grand Burton, Esq., of Chicago, was elected a non-resident member; and Hon. C. H. Davis, of St. Paul, Senator-elect from Minnesota, and Dr. Geo. Frederick Holmes, of the University of Virginia, honorary members. The paper of the evening, 'The Sonnets: some New Inferences from Old Facts,' by Wm. J. Rolfe, owing to its author's inability to be present, was read by Mr. Nevin. Mr. Rolfe disclaimed any desire to add to the multitude of theories already aggregated about these wonderful poems. But after long study he was inclined to come back to the starting point, and hold that they were in truth and fact autobiographical—were William Himself, not as the crazy Barnstolff held, because the initials of their dedicatee, W. H., could be so interpreted, but because the difficulties in the way of not believing them autobiographical were greater than those in the way of so believing them. For example, it was possible to read them so that they made a connected history of narrative. Now, if the relater of this narrative was simply relating the story of another man's life, why should he, the relater, express remorse? Remorse is one thing, regret is another. But the historian poet does not simply regret that the history was thus and so. He expresses *remorse* (Mr. Rolfe here quoted numerous examples). This feature seemed to stamp the history as autobiographical.

The points made in this paper were summed up thus at the close:

1st. That the Sonnets were not edited by Shakespeare, but by some anonymous collector, who did not, and obviously could not, ask the poet or the persons to whom they were addressed for aid in settling a textual question. [Dowden and others have taken the ground that the edition of 1609 was not authorized or supervised by Shakespeare, but Mr. Rolfe claims to be the first to *prove* this beyond a doubt from certain typographical

peculiarities—the significance of which has been strangely overlooked by critics and commentators.]

2d. That the arrangement of the Sonnets in the edition of 1609 was therefore not authoritative, but simply the best conjectural one that the collector could make from a study of the poems, and what he knew of their history; and there is, moreover, internal evidence that the order is not strictly chronological.

3d. That the great majority of the Sonnets are personal, or autobiographical, and were not intended for publication; but it is not probable that the first 126 (or such of these as are personal) are all addressed to one man, and the rest to one woman, with whom Shakespeare and that man were both entangled.

4th. That in whatever sense 'Mr. W. H.' may have been the 'begetter' of the Sonnets, all the attempts to identify him have been unsuccessful, and some of them ridiculous.

5th. That while the majority of the Sonnets were probably written before 1599, some of them may be of later date, especially those in which the poet refers to himself as old and tired of life.

Mr. Fleming said, in moving the reference of the paper to the Publication Committee, that his own study of the Sonnets had led him to the same conclusion as that arrived at by Mr. Rolfe. For his own part he did not think so highly of the Sonnets as compared with the other Shakespeare work; and thought it was as autobiographical sketches, rather than as literary productions, that they were valuable at all. The speaker pictured Shakespeare as a many-sided man, and believed Dowden not far wrong when he spoke of the Romeo element and the Hamlet element; the former referring to the passions or emotions, the latter to the intellect. Romeo lived in the world of feeling; Hamlet in that of thought. Shakespeare lived in both. The speaker here quoted the 42d and 131st Sonnets, which seemed to him almost a rhymed statement of the passage in Hamlet's soliloquy, beginning 'For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,' etc. In fact it had always been a pet theory of his life (the speaker's) that both the Sonnets and the soliloquy were autobiographical, and that much that elsewhere was enigmatical could be illuminated by so considering them. Mr. Morgan thought it was hardly safe to follow such enthusiastic gentlemen as Mr. Dowden too precipitately. Shakespeare was not only the most objective, but also the least subjective of poets. It was

simply impossible to ascertain what he spoke in the character of his personages, and what he spoke (if he ever spoke) in his own, William Shakespeare's, character. The speaker knew that Mr. Dowden, or somebody, had discovered that the wail of Constance for her lost child was written by Shakespeare just after the death of his son Hamnet, and that he made one of his characters advise men never to marry ladies older than themselves, from an abiding personal experience of the folly of such an act, etc., etc. But a parity of interpretation would make out Shakespeare to have been a beetle, and to have spoken from his own personal experience when testifying that a beetle trod upon feels a pang as great as when a giant dies, and, in the speaker's opinion, suffocate us in a mass of absurdities. He thought Mr. Rolfe's point as to the difference between remorse and regret well taken. It is said to be natural for us to bear up bravely against the temptations of others and to succumb to our own. Mr. Rolfe, the speaker thought, had great reason for believing the temptation here to be Shakespeare's own. Mr. Reynolds asked if there was any known difficulty anywhere to the formation of any theory possible about the Sonnets, whether theorizers would ever be interrupted or disconcerted by any facts. So far as he had read the critics and commentators, they all disagreed about the Sonnets, but none of them were able to contradict each other or show wherein each other was wrong. He had listened with great pleasure to Mr. Rolfe's paper which seemed to him to deal with the Sonnets as they stood, rather than to manufacture schemes for them, and he seconded the motion to refer it to the Committee on Publication. Mr. Frey said he thought that in the Sonnets Shakespeare had boasted of his future fame and triumphs. 'We all know that the poet had produced so many plays, and such excellent ones, *before 1592*, as to make Robert Greene, the great critic of the day, exceedingly envious. It is therefore, not to be wondered at that a young man with such honors thrust upon him should exult a little, and perhaps exhibit in his Sonnets a self-consciousness of his future immortality.' Mr. Frey quoted in explanation portions of Sonnets 18 and 19:

> So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, ...
> Yet, do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong,
> My love shall in my verse ever live young, etc.

Mr. Frey added that numerous similar expressions had been detected by him, and they seemed to him to be signs of youth and immaturity rather than, as Dowden calls them, 'intimations of immortality.' The motion to refer the paper of the evening to the Publication Committee was then agreed to. At the next regular meeting, April 28th, the paper of the evening will be 'On the desirability of Uniformity in the Notation of the Critical Editions,' by the Hon. Alvey A. Adee.

Shakespeare's Stage Art.—It is always very useful in forming opinions about Shakespeare to be conversant with the action of the play upon the stage. Nobody, I venture to think, can *fully* appreciate Shakespeare unless he sees his plays acted as well as reads them, because the art of Shakespeare for stage purposes is just as marvellous as his art as a poet; a psychologist, and a delineator of character and action. In fact, when we consider what the theatre practically was in Shakespeare's time, what his material aids and appliances were, it often occurs to me that his art of stage structure and arrangement is one of the most wonderful things in connection with him, because all these appliances had to be constructed entirely in the imagination. He had a plain platform and a curtain behind him, an entrance or two, and a means of appearing at an upper window. Everything else had to be conceived; and yet he has constructed and arranged scenes which admit of the best appliances of the most skillful stage mechanists and painters.

He has, in fact, done for the material appliances of the theatre something equivalent to what he has done in the female characters of his plays. He had only boys to act these parts, and yet he has conceived characters which cannot be adequately embodied but by the most womanly of women.—Mr. Tom Taylor in *Transactions New Shakspere Society*, Vol. I.

The Drama.

Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,
And each doth good turns now unto the other.
—Sonnet XLVII.

MODJESKA IN TWELFTH NIGHT.—The curtain rises upon a passable, but by no means masterly theatrical tempest, and after the mechanical agitation aroused has subsided, Madame Modjeska's sweet, gliding voice, asking for Viola, 'What country, friends, is this?' in its half-dazed sadness and bewilderment, is more effectual than any stage storm to give the audience a lively realization of the shipwreck that has cast her on this strange shore, and torn her away from the brother she fears is drowned and in Elysium, yet hopes may be on earth. The sailor, who humors and helps her plan to serve as the Duke's page, until she has made her 'own occasion mellow what [her] estate is,' does not speak his words much more as if they belonged to his own part than it is the custom of messengers, first and second gentlemen, sailors, and the like to deliver the lines set down for them. But as the play progresses it is pleasant to see that this company—as may be said distinctively of Madame Modjeska's companies, generally—is independently alive, and not a band of wooden Noah's-ark accompaniments for one eminent figure of flesh and blood. So that one might have borrowed John Downes's comment, of over two hundred years ago, on the performance of his Royal Highness, the Duke of York's servants in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, and say,—'*Twelfth Night* or *What You Will;* wrote by Mr. Wm. Shakespeare, had nightly Success by its well Performance.'

Mr. Barrymore was handsome and effective, as the love-sick, poetic, and capricious young Duke, though a shade too nonchalant; and Modjeska, having doffed the clinging and somber draperies that cloaked her from the storm in the earlier scene, shone most attractive of pages, in a modern Greco-Turkish costume of white bordered with

gold—a short round-about jacket barely clearing the belt, and showing the full shirt, and a short skirt falling over the thighs—the whole forming a disguise most happily 'becoming the form of [her] intent:' for she 'has known Orsino but three days, and already [she] is no stranger,' already her eyes live upon the sight of him, while he listens to the 'old, plain song;' and then she goes sighing to woo his lady for him, who, herself, would be his wife.

***

The first scene in Olivia's house proclaims at once that Miss Mary Shaw is a sprightly Maria, witty enough to spy out more than one device, along with that vice in Malvolio, which later gives her sport against him such 'notable cause to work.'

Sir Toby, in the person of Wm. F. Owen, is a jolly Falstaffian fellow, though blunter than any Sir John ought to be. He does no violence to the play by indulging in the coarse horse-play—that too often is the only feature of the appearance of some modern Falstaffs and Sir Tobys,—though on the other hand, he confines himself no finer than he is. As for Sir Andrew Aguecheek, it would not be easy to mirror him better than did Mr. Ian Robertson. The tall, lean knight, with drooping lint locks, lisping falsetto, silly simper, and his empty-headed, self-complaisancy,—not strong enough, as Malvolio's was, to assert its dignity, but dependent and constantly seeking Sir Toby's approval,—had always the nobleman's air of including himself among the great of the earth, and of claiming to be acknowledged equal to the best of the company; so that the fun he pokes at himself is the more irresistible for being unconscious, in that happy phrase which so well characterizes both Sir Toby and Sir Andrew. 'Beshrew me,' says the clown, 'the knight's in admirable fooling.' 'Ay,' agrees Sir Andrew, 'he does well enough if he be disposed, and so do I too; he does it with a better grace, but I do it more natural.'

The clown proves to be a fellow 'wise enough to play the fool'—'a practice as full of labour as a wise man's art,' and in the dialogue with Maria, the easy skipping wit of these jolly dependents of the house makes a prologue, like a foil, for the first entrance of the fair mistress of the mansion in her lonely sadness and morbid dispirited-

ness over her brother's death. Miss Grace Henderson's studied preoccupation with grief and half-disdainful humoring of the clown's talk, 'for want of other idleness,' was as piquant and attractive a setting for that capability of absorbing love, which the Duke had recognized in her, 'when the rich golden shaft should kill the flock of all affections else,' as her rich, black robes of mourning were for her peculiar blonde beauty.

It was the prettiest of scenes when Viola, entering as the Duke's ambassador of love, gazes bewildered among the group of attendants where Olivia, bent on teasing the importunate youth, stands veiled, and asks,—'The honourable lady of the house, which is she?' 'Speak to me,' replies Olivia, 'I shall answer for her.' Viola manfully addresses herself to her speech in the face of this awkwardness maliciously prepared to put her out, breaks down, and then makes a merit of it, saying, with the most appealing glances round the circle meanwhile,—

> I pray you, tell me if this be the lady of the house, for I never saw her; I would be loath to cast away my speech, for besides that it is excellently well penned, I have taken great pains to con it. Good beauties!—Let me sustain no scorn!—I am very comptible, even to the least sinister usage.—I, v, 161.

This womanly throwing of herself on their fair protection is as charming to the audience, which is in Cesario's secret, as is the prudent quick-wittedness of her reply when Olivia, evidently struck behind her veil with this graceful, smooth-tongued youth, inquires: 'Whence came you Sir?' 'I can say little more than I have studied and that question is out of my part,'—answers Cesario, and flashes on in the same breath to her charge, 'Good gentle one, give me modest assurance if you be the lady of the house, that I may proceed in my speech.' But from henceforth Olivia is ready to drink in more eagerly every word he has to say for any light it may bring her of himself. She breaks in often with direct questions, and she delights more and more in the 'skipping dialogue,' she, who not five minutes before had been so weary of all passing events.

What can be more enticing to her in this mood than this youth's

declaration of how unceasingly he would woo her were he in his master's place, in her denial find no sense, but make a willow cabin at her gate and call upon his soul within the house! 'You might do much,' replies Olivia; and if there was any mesh in the net of love yet unknitted round her, it is secured and holds fast this dear Lady Disdain, when upon offering Cesario money, he spurns it with heat and pride, exclaiming in the face of her admiration of his fire, and his abrupt leave-taking,—

> I am no *feed* post, lady; keep your purse:
> My *master*, not myself, lacks recompense.
> Love make his heart of flint that you shall love;
> And let your fervour, like my master's be
> Plac'd in *contempt!* Farewell, fair cruelty.
>
> —I, v, 267.

* * *

There can be nothing so full of innocence and natural fooling as the midnight drinking and caterwauling of the two knights assisted in their merriment by the cooler and nimbler wit of the clown. It is almost enough to make any one but Malvolio forgive drunkenness, and as for witnesses less puritanical, it makes such an artlessly jolly picture that one would as soon forbid a kitten to chase its tail, because it was a useless and unworthy occupation, as preach the higher morality of moderation to these three merry Vapians. As for Malvolio he needs to learn the fraternal influence of cakes and ale, and deserves his punishment.

Whoever has seen Mr. Irving play Malvolio will never be satisfied with any other, and certainly may be incapacitated from judging Mr. Carhart's fairly. Otherwise Malvolio seemed to be the weakest point in the fair front the rank of main actors in Madame Modjeska's company presented to the glare of the footlights.

* * *

Mr. E. Hamilton-Bell's Sebastian was refined, showed good, earnest workmanship, and brought out those qualities of fidelity in friendship and devotion in love which go to assure Olivia of her good fortune in a husband, when she discovers that this clever young fellow she takes for his sister, is the man she married by mistake for the youth,

Cesario. This marriage complication, and the coil with Sebastian's friend are well carried through, along with that final drollery of Sir Toby's arrangement, the duel between the coward-simpleton, Sir Antony, and the trembling woman-page, Cesario. Modjeska's acting of this scene was irresistible, her reading of her lines full of the most true and delicate shading. With her ardent face full of apprehension she beseeches Sir Toby to do her the courteous office to know of the Knight what her offence is; 'it is something of my negligence,' she pleads, 'nothing of my purpose.' And when Fabian adds to her consternation by his picture of her 'skilful, bloody, and fatal opposite,' yet offers to make her peace with him, if he can, she is touchingly grateful; and is then led by this kindness to a little confidence with a humorous dash of naive recklessness in it:—

> I am one that had rather go with sir priest than sir knight;
> I care not who knows so much of my mettle!

Wild dreams of escape follow, and defeated attempts. Till, come to the issue of the event to which Sir Toby and Fabian have infinite trouble to bring these unwilling fighters, Viola's knees knock together, her whole womanly frame shivers with fright; then, there being no alternative left, she draws, blinds her eyes with one arm and strikes out with the other with a furious circular motion, as though she were cutting tall grass. But when she comes to realize that, for some strange reason this 'devil in private brawl,' is not so dangerous, she has a good chance to hit him, sees it, and refrains from doing it, which last stroke of womanly generosity was as much applauded as her go-it-blind desperation.

The charm of Madame Modjeska's action is always superior to such palpable hits. It is impossible for her to be farcical. She placed the most evident of these effects, which the whole audience duly appreciated, in an atmosphere of grace and naturalness which seemed to make them luminous of Viola's sweet womanhood.

The completing touches in the picture were her self-contained, glad greeting of the brother her quick conception had guessed out, before the story was all told and proved; and the ripe joy that possessed her, perfectly, when the Duke rested his lot with her's.

There is always a peculiarly personal gracefulness and delicacy in every stroke of Madame Modjeska's acting. It is a quality which brings to the mind, in comparing whatever parts she has illustrated, Camille, Nadjesda, Juliet, Rosalind, or Viola, that which is felt behind all these parts—the refining genius of her own nature. This individual note of power and earnest purpose, like the inherent literary style of a great author, cannot be mistaken. Scores of small writers express themselves virtually alike, others adopt small mannerisms, but he who expresses *himself* by means of any art reveals this original force. The extreme plasticity of the actor's art wars to the utmost against it—for stiffness of handling and an unwieldy persistence of the self hood is not to be confounded with it—but spite of the widest scope of variability in the parts characterized, this interior individuality will animate the method and mark the genius of the masterly actor. This is an ultimate test to try skill by, and one will not hesitate to give it a high value on perceiving that Jefferson, Booth, and Irving have it, and Ellen Terry, Bernhardt, and Modjeska.

C. P.

Mrs. Reese's views on her husband's Shakespeare Society. —'You know, Mr. Forbes, I do not believe in the Shakespeare Society at all.' . . . 'I have read *Hamlet*, I have read it twice over; and although Hamlet is a most inconsistent and unpleasant young man, there is nothing incomprehensible about him. I have besides seen Booth, Fechter, Irving, and Salvini act it. I said to myself if there was a mystery about the play, I would find it out. But there is no mystery about it; not the slightest.' . . . 'It is the fashion nowadays to have societies for the better comprehension of authors,' Paul suggested. 'There is the Browning Society, for example.'

'O, it is very natural to have a Browning Society, just as one has a key to a Chinese puzzle,—but Shakespeare wrote good English.'—From *Sons and Daughters*, p. 193.

Literary Notes.

When comes your book forth?
Upon the heels of my presentment, sir.
—*Timon of Athens, I, i, 26.*

THE libretto of Verdi's *Otello* bears on cover and title-page the name of Boito, and not one mention of Shakespeare's authorship of its great original: but, looking over the smooth-flowing, or symmetrically abrupt verses, one finds that it is very properly so. William Shakespeare's Titanic play is transformed and transfused into a *Dramma lirico*, quite of Arrigo Boito's own, though, also, evidently, flavored and inspired by that potent life of the sixteenth century whose great breath yet stirs in modern activities, and now has had its part in the peculiarly Italian delicacies of this new and beautiful opera. From the exquisitely printed lettering of the dainty, decorative, paper cover, with its faint greenish-blue tints, stamped all over with Venetian symbols in pale gilt—itself a foreign and unusual pleasure to Gothic eyes, not wont to find beauty in the cover of a pamphlet—to the contents, that show the warm thread of sentiment and passion which Boito has seized for his clue out of the Shakespearian labyrinth, there is throughout all a Latin charm. He who has cosmopolitan sympathies will enjoy the savor of it, however sternly persuaded at the core he may be that it is comparatively a lesser pleasure that delights him.

The first act of *Othello*, the prologue to the swelling theme, where as usual, Shakespeare makes his solid dramatic start—giving us authority, chapter and verse, for the characterization and the poised beginning of the plot to be thence developed—Boito cuts off altogether. With a different conduct of similar events to those which take place in Shakespeare's second act Boito's play begins. Iago, Roderigo, and Cassio also, with a throng of Cypriotes, cry—'A sail'!—'A sail'!

—in choral succession, watch the storm, make operatic exclamations, and hail in triumphant strains Otello's final disembarkation from the angry deep. The drinking scene follows and the quarrel to which Iago eggs on Cassio. The town and Desdemona and Otello awakened by the tumult, and Cassio degraded from his office, the Moor turns thereafter, to a love-duet with his bride, a passionate, supplementary *scena* not set down in any text but Boito's. The second act takes up the beginning of Iago's incitement of Cassio to beg Desdemona's interference in his favor, and the first of his wily soliciting of his General's mind to suspicion and jealousy; and the shortened outline of the tragic story moves on, without so many details yet without the precipitate effect of the Shakespearian play, to the end of the third act, where Otello, utterly subject to Iago's evil promptings, falls prostrate at his feet, while the voices of the people are heard calling 'Evviva Otello, the Lion of Venice,' and Iago in triumphant scorn cries in turn, 'Behold the Lion!' and thence to the bitter close in the fourth act, the outcome of this subjection, where Otello's only happiness is to die upon a kiss. The chorus of flower girls in honor of Desdemona; the skillfully arranged quartette of Desdemona with her suspicious lord, and Emilia with Iago, who wants her to give him the handkerchief she has just picked up; the effective conduct of Iago's dialogue with Cassio, which Otello is placed to overhear, and which without the intervention of any Bianca, except as a name, and with chance words caught, here and there, from their whispers and their laughter, artfully inflames Otello's fury to the last degree; these scenes bring out the lyric and Italian treatment of the theme: but perhaps the most forcible of the foreign strains introduced into the dramatic exhibition of the plot is Iago's *Credo* to which Verdi's music lends an awful beauty. This takes the place of Iago's soliloquy, after the advice he gives Cassio in the Shakespeare play for the recovery of his lost position. Boito's text was doubtless 'Divinity of Hell' (II, iii, 327), and his discourse follows thus:—

> Credo in un Dio crudel che m' ha creato
> Simile a sè, e che nell' ira io nomo.
> Dalla viltà d'un germe o d'un atòmo

Vile so nato
Son scellerato
Perchè so uomo ;
E sento il fango originario in me.
Sì ! questa è la mia fè !
Credo co fermo cuor, siccome crede
La vedovella al tempio,
Che il mal ch' io penso e che da me procede
Per mio destino adempio.
Credo che il gisto è un istrïon beffardo
E nel viso e nel cuor,
Che tutto è in lui bugiardo ;
Lagrima, bacio, sguardo,
Sacrificio ed onor.
E credo l'uom gioco d'iniqua sorte
Dal germe della culla
Al verme del' avel.
Vien dopo tata irrïson la Morte.
E poi ?—La Morte è il Nulla
E vecchia fola il Ciel.

Pepy's Diary, that gossipy record of Restoration Times, shines perennially by the reflected light it sheds on many points of interest to the student of English development and of the progress or obscuration of the Shakespeare influence: and two new editions of this instructive piece of garrulity are forthcoming in the Spring book-market. The one is being issued in parts in Cassell's cheap and good National Library. (Nos. 33, 42 and 60.) The third instalment of the Diary 1663-64 being dated March 19th. The other is an edition for the library shelf, a reprint of the Bickers edition in four octavo volumes, published by David McKay of Philadelphia.

Chapman will fall under the subject headings of the next volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and Mr. A. H. Bullen will contribute the article on that Elizabethan scholar and poet whose translation of Homer, Godwin said, is 'one of the greatest treasures the English language has to boast.'

A German version of Boito's *Otello* will form the libretto for a performance of Verdi's opera to be given, in Berlin, at the Victoria Theatre.

Miscellany.

To knit again
This scattered corn into one mutual sheaf.
—*Titus Andronicus*, V, iii, 70.

PARAGRAPHS FROM THE LOWELL LECTURES.—Mr. James Russell Lowell's recent lectures on 'The Old English Dramatists,' have attracted a great literary success, and his recitations of select illustrative passages have heightened its effect. The course was begun at the Lowell Institute, Boston, on the 9th of March, with a sketch of the history of dramatic literature in Europe during the period of the revival of learning, and with a description of the characteristics of some of Shakespeare's predecessors and more particularly of Shirley, Greene and Peele. Who were the old English dramatists?—he asked, and made answer somewhat as follows:—

They were a score or so of literary Bohemians, for the most part, living from hand to mouth in London during the last ten years of the sixteenth century and the first thirty of the seventeenth. Of the personal history of most of them we know little. Three or four of them were men of genius, though the greatest of them was immeasurably below that apparition known to moderns as Shakespeare. . . . . .

Nothing seems more startling than the sudden spring with which English poetry blossomed in the latter years of Elizabeth's reign. The writers of that age were men of genius; but much more must have gone before to make their genius available. There had to be a language adapted to various modes of expression, and a certain amount of culture. Many things had silently and slowly to be done to make that singular pre-eminence of Elizabethan literature possible. First of all, the national consciousness must be made aware of itself, and then the nation requires a capital, and this must serve as the head and heart of literature. . . . Whatever place can draw together the greatest amount and variety of character, a most abundant civilization, affords the best opportunity for a university. London was such a centre in the days of Queen Elizabeth,

and in those days our speech was still at school and with vagrant truancy had been gathering wild flowers and nests of singing birds : . . . the language had not yet become literary, and therefore more or less commonplace. What words they used were just from the die and were not worn smooth in the daily round of drudgery and prosaic service. The parts of speech in a language of these old poets are just irregular enough to give that strangeness which shows a hardly perceptible modern accent by contrast. I think that making all due abatements they had many gifts in a measure which has fallen to the share of very few of our own poets. Chapman, in his translation of the *Iliad*, protests against those who preferred the softer romance languages to the rude vigor of their native tongue.

The men of those times were fortunate in being able to gather their language with the dew still on it, as herbs are gathered in the morning. But we must not suppose that they did not select, arrange and combine their words and make use most carefully of all the means in their reach for perfecting their use of this new tongue. There was something in them of the eagerness of adventure and discovery. They must have felt the delight of wandering over the pathless places of speech. Hence, perhaps, it is that their step is so elastic. They never seem conscious of any lassitude when they put forth their best paces.

There are, I grant, dreary wastes and vast solitudes in these old plays where we walk only through the sands without so much as a mirage to comfort us. We class all these poets together because they wrote for the theatre. Yet how little were they truly dramatic ! None, or next to none of their plays have held the stage. Not one of these characters that I can remember has become known as among the familiar figures that are alluded to in the society of cultivated men. Marlowe, great as he was, is no exception. . . . One of these men was Robert Greene. It was he who said that Shakespeare was an upstart crow dressed out with other men's feathers. As if anybody could have had any use of feathers from such a bird as he.

Another dramatist with whom we can dispense very well was George Peele. He had not that genius for being dull all the time which Greene had. There is a pensiveness in some of his writings which is certainly touching. Of others in the list it may be said that some of them wrote with great dignity of style; they were very careful about the arrangement of words, and they were not incapable of that emotion which might almost be said to pass over into passion. They have fancy, kindling at times well-nigh into imagination. Fine phrases seem to drop casually from these men ; in some grace, strength and simplicity. Yet there is crudeness, as though the wine was drawn before the ferment was over. But there is life. There is more wealth in Shakespeare's treasures than in all of his contemporaries put together. . . . To some of them we cannot

deny genius, but creative genius can be ascribed to few of them and dramatic genius to fewer still. Studying the old dramatists enables us the better to understand Shakespeare. There is no better school for learning English in many most important respects than the critical study of these old plays.

The second lecture, of the 12th of March, was very properly the most marked of the course, as Marlowe's life made an epoch paramount in this dramatic succession.

Christopher Marlowe, the son of a shoemaker, was born in Canterbury, in February, 1563. He came early to London, and was already known as a dramatist before the end of his twenty-fourth year. There is reason to believe that at one time he was an actor. He was killed in a tavern brawl in 1593, at the age of thirty years.

This, I think, may be said of Marlowe, that he was one of the most masculine natures in all the long line of British poets. Perhaps his energy was even in excess. There is in him an Oriental lavishness. He will impoverish a province for a simile, and pour the revenues of a kingdom into the lap of a couplet. His imagination does, indeed, flame and flare at times, consuming what it should caress. The exquisite phrase of Hamlet, 'the modesty of nature,' never would occur to him. Yet, in the midst of the hurly-burly, there will fall a sudden hush, and we come upon passages calm and pellucid as the mountain tarns filled to the brim with the very distillation of heaven.

The impression he made upon the men of his time was uniform. It was that of something new and strange. In short, it was that of genius. Shakespeare has quoted from Marlowe, 'He never loved who loved not at first sight.' Marlowe was that most indefinable thing, an original man; and therefore, in what is best of him, he is as fresh and contemporaneous to-day as he was three hundred years ago.

Marlowe was not an artist in the larger sense, but he was singularly cunning in words and periods, and the modulation of them; and even this is a rare gift. But his mind never could yield itself to a controlling purpose and renounce all other things for that. There is no regularity in his plays, except in *Edward the Second*, and the regularity there is only to the eye. Yet Lamb was hardly extravagant in saying that the death-scene of Marlowe's king moves us to pity and terror beyond anything in dramatic literature.

Now, let us look a little closer at Marlowe as a dramatist. He has an importance less for what he accomplished than for what he suggested to others. Not only do I think that Shakespeare's verse caught some hints from his, but there are certain descriptive passages and similes in the greater part which, whenever I read them, instantly bring Marlowe to my

mind. This is an old impression of mine, and so constantly repeats itself that I have confidence in it. Marlowe's *Edward the Second* certainly served Shakespeare as a model for his earlier historical plays. In the parallel scenes of both plays the sentiment is rather elegiac than dramatic, but there is, I think, greater pathos in Richard and his grief, and a pathos which is deeper than anything in Edward. Surely one might fancy *Edward the Second* to be from the prentice hand of Shakespeare. It is no small distinction that this can be said of Marlowe, for it can be said of no other. There are in Marlowe those touches of nature which are so common in Shakespeare and so rare everywhere else. It is not ungrateful to our feeling of Shakespeare's immeasurable supremacy to think that even he had been helped in his schooling by such a man as Marlowe.

You will observe of Marlowe's verse that it is rather epic than dramatic. I mean by this that its every voice and every movement is regular in its cadence. There is a royal composure in it, perhaps; but were it not so finely pathetic, or the diction less natural and simple, it would seem almost stiff. Now, nothing is more peculiarly characteristic of the mature Shakespeare than the way in which his phrases concur with the fluctuating passion of the speaker and echo his mood. There are, perhaps, properly speaking, no characters in the plays of Marlowe; there are only interlocutors. We do not get to know them, but only to know what they say. Shakespeare makes no such mistake in Shylock as Marlowe makes in his Jew of Malta. In letting Shylock exact the pound of flesh, he but followed the story as he found it; and he is careful to let us know that this Jew had good reasons, or thought he had good reasons, for hating the Christians. At the end I think he meant us to pity Shylock, and we do pity him. In Marlowe's Jew nothing happens because it must, but because the author wills it so.

Marlowe had found at least the way that leads to style and helped others to find it; but he never arrived at it. He had not self-denial; he could refuse nothing to his fancy. He fails of his effect almost always by overemphasis, heaping upon the slender thought a burden of expression quite too heavy for it to carry. But it is not with fagots, it is with priceless oriental stuffs that he loads it.

No such verses as Marlowe's had been heard on the English stage before, and this is one of the great debts our language owes to him. He has taught us what passion and power are in its veins. His poetic instinct, when he had time enough to give himself up to its guidance was unerring. I say 'had time enough,' for he, like his brother poets, was forced to make the daily task bring in the daily bread. If we allow him genius, what need to ask for more? And perhaps it would be only to him, among the group of dramatists who surrounded Shakespeare, that we should allow it. He seems to be the herald who dropped dead in announcing the victory whose fruits he was never to see.

From the succeeding lectures, of the 16th, 19th, and 23d March, on Webster, Chapman, and Beaumont and Fletcher, the following passages are culled:—

Many of Shakespeare's contemporary poets must have had every advantage he had in practical experience, and all of them probably had as familiar an intercourse with the theatre as he, but what a difference between their manner of constructing a plot and his! In all his dramatic works his skill in this is more or less apparent; in his mature days, unrivalled. From the very first scene he seems to have beheld, as from a tower, the end of all. In *Romeo and Juliet*, for example—and I turn to that as being a comparatively early play—he has a story before him and follows it closely enough, but how naturally one scene is linked to another. How directly each scene leads to the next. If this play illustrates anything, it would seem to be that our lives are ruled by chance; but nothing is left to chance in the action. The play advances with the exactness of destiny. The characters are made subordinate to the interests of the play, as if it were something in which they had a concern. In the greater part of the secondary dramatists the characters seem like unpractised people trying to walk the deck of a ship in rough weather. They are hustled every way and bring up anywhere.

It may possibly have been that Shakespeare, in choosing his scenes, had a keener perception of the dramatic possibilities of the story; and it is certain that he preferred taking his stories ready to his hand rather than to invent them. Indeed, all the good stories seem to have invented themselves in a most obliging manner somewhere in the morning of the world.

These thoughts have brought forcibly to my mind the miscellaneous crudities of plot in the plays of John Webster. All we know of Webster may be shortly summed up. We do not know when he was born. We do not know when he died. We do not know whether he had ever been a student in a university or not. We do not know which one of the three or four different John Websters whose son he might have been was his father. All that we really know about him is that he first appears in 1601 as having assisted in a certain play, and that he disappears in 1624.

In his plays the plots are very complicated, and they are made still more puzzling by the somewhat motiveless conduct of many of his characters. When Webster invented a plot of his own he filled it with scenes and incidents such as not merely to baffle the understanding, but such as the imagination cannot get over. Mere common sense seems to have very little to do in the matter, but he wished the understanding to have as few difficulties in its way as possible.

There is something in Webster that reminds me of Victor Hugo. There is at times the same confusion of what is big with what is great; the same fondness for moral speculation, the same insufferably repulsive details, the

same indifference to probability, the same leaning toward the grotesque, the same love for effect at whatever cost. Whatever other effect Webster may produce upon us, he never leaves us indifferent. We may criticise as we will, but we shudder and admire nevertheless.

As I turn from one to another of the old dramatists and consider how very little is known about their personal history, the question is constantly coming into my mind whether we gain or lose by our ignorance of the personal details of their history, and I think on the whole it is fortunate for us that our judgment of what the old dramatists did should be so little disturbed by any imperfect information as to what they were. For to be imperfectly informed is to be misinformed.

George Chapman was born in Hertfordshire in 1559, probably; and he died in London in 1634, and was buried in the Church of St. Giles in the Fields. He was five years older than Shakespeare, whom he survived nearly twenty years, and fifteen years older than Ben Jonson, who outlived him three years. There is good ground for believing that he studied at both universities, though he took a degree at neither. While in the universities he seems to have devoted himself to the classics and to have despised philosophy. This contempt, however, seems to have been somewhat doubtful, for he is certainly the most obtrusively metaphysical of all our dramatists.

Dryden says that in Chapman the sense of one line is expanded into ten. Certainly, he here puts his finger on one of Chapman's faults. He never knew when to stop. But what Dryden says is not true if it means that Chapman was accustomed to water his thoughts to make them fill up. There is abundance of thought, and very suggestive thought, too; but it is not always, by any means, in the right place. He is certainly the most sententious of our poets. He is sententious to a fault.

Nearly all his comedies are formless and coarse. Yet that does not seem to be his own most natural style. There seems to be in his writings a kind of wilful coarseness, as if he tried to make his personages speak in what he supposed to be the proper dialect. He had never learned it himself in those haunts familiar at that time to most men of letters, where this language was the vernacular.

Of his comedies *All Fools* is by common consent held to be the best. It may be called lively and amusing. But he indulges himself freely in all that depreciation of woman that had been so long traditional. His notion of love is coarse and animal, or rather, the notion that he thinks proper to express through the characters. Yet, in his comedies there are two passages, one in praise of love, the other in praise of woman, which are certainly among the best of their kind. The first is from *All Fools*, and begins: –

> I tell thee, love is nature's second sun,
> Causing a spring of virtues where he shines.

The second is still finer. It is from the *Gentleman Usher*:—

Let no man value at little price a virtuous woman's counsel.
Her winged spirit is feathered oftentimes with heavenly words, and like her beauty, ravishing and pure.
Her weaker body hath still the stronger soul.
O, what a treasure is a virtuous wife, discreet and loving!

The posthumously published tragedy, *Revenge and Homer*, is, in conception by far the most original of his plays. The plot seems to be his own invention. It has great improbability: but, as the story is oriental, we find it easy to forgive that. It is, on the whole, a very striking play and has more variety of character than is common with Chapman.

In general we find that Chapman's language, though often noble, not unfrequently rises into a fury, recalling Hamlet's word 'robustious.' He seems to be shouting through a speaking trumpet in a gale of wind. He is especially fine in describing battles. The rush of his narrative is almost like a charge of cavalry. His battle scenes are certainly very fine. One line of his has always seemed to me especially fine:—

And there the heart of this huge battle broke.

Whether his translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are Homer or not, if the Greek original had been lost, and we had only Chapman, would it not enable us to revive some, at least, of the qualities of the original? I think it would, and I think this is perhaps as fair a test as any. In Chapman's poem there is life, there is energy and the consciousness of them.

Beaumont and Fletcher are the double star of our poetical firmament, and their names are so closely mingled that it is vain to attempt any division of them that shall assign to each his rightful share. The general tradition seems to have been that Beaumont contributed artistic judgment, and Fletcher fine frenzy. There is probably a grain of truth in traditions of this kind. . . We have, it is true, some ground on which we may safely form a collection of all the individual characteristics of Fletcher, because a majority of the plays which go under their joint names were written by him alone after Beaumont's death. In these I think I find a higher and graver poetical quality and a ripe vein of sentiment than in any of the others. Very many of them seem to be drawn from nature; much more commonly than in his contemporaries. When I come upon a picturesque passage in the joint plays I am apt to think it Fletcher's; so, too, when there is a certain exhilaration and largeness of matter and a something that charges his words with imagination, or, if not with imagination, at least with an enthusiasm which comes very near it in effect; in short, what I have been hesitating to hint is that I am glad to think Fletcher more the poet of the two. Where there is pathos or humor, I am in doubt whether they belong to him or his partner, where I find these qualities, both in the plays which they wrote together, and in those which are wholly Fletcher's. In the expression of sentiment going far enough to excite a passionless, and

perhaps what one might call an æsthetic sympathy, but stopping short of tragic passion, Beaumont is quite the equal of his friend. Both had the art of being pathetic and of conceiving pathetic situations, but neither of them had depth enough of character for that tragic pathos which is too terrible for tears. Theirs are no sudden revelations, flashes out of the tempest itself, but much rather a melancholic Ovidian grace like that of the Heroic Epistles, conscious of itself, yet not so conscious as to beget distress. If they open the sacred sources of sympathetic tears, it is not, to be sure, without due warning and ceremonious preparation. I do not mean to say that their sentiment is not real, but it is never heart-rending. I sum it all up in saying that their region is that of fancy. Fancy and imagination may be of one substance, as the Northern lights and lightning are supposed to be. But the one flickers in harmless flashes and streamers; the other condenses all its thought-executing fires into a single stamp of flame. And so the humor of Beaumont and Fletcher is intellectual and elaborate, like that of Charles Lamb when he trifles with it, easing itself with artificial dislocations of thought, never glancing at those essential incongruities in the nature of things, at sight of which the profounder humor shakes its toils and makes them almost shudder.

Beaumont and Fletcher's comedies are certainly amusing, and one of them— *Wit Without Money*— is excellent, with some scenes of a joyous vein in it that are very cheerful. The fourth scene of the third act is a masterpiece of fanciful extravagance. This is probably Fletcher's.

The conversations in Fletcher's comedies are often laughable, but what is called the wit of them is generally a gentlemanlike banter—that is, what was gentlemanly in that day. Nothing grows mouldy so soon as mere fun, the product of animal spirits. Fletcher had far more of this than of true humor: and yet both he and Beaumont were skilled in that pleasantry which is a skillful substitute for that trenchant article in good society. Nearly all of their comedies have the merit of being laughable, which, to one who has read many comedies, is saying a great deal.

I have said it is hazardous to attempt to divide the work of Beaumont and Fletcher where they have worked together. Both, of course, are to blame for what is the great blot on the play of *Philaster:* I mean Philaster's ready, I might almost say eager, belief in the guilt of the Princess.

But Beaumont and Fletcher have drawn upright women. Bellario and Arethusa are such ; so is Aspatia. We must never forget that the coarseness of phrase is not always coarseness of thought. Women were allowed to talk then and to use words now forbidden outside of the slums. Decency changes its terms, though not its nature, from one age to another.

This is a partial excuse for Beaumont and Fletcher, but they sinned against that intellect of the conscience which is the same in all ages.

SELECTED REPRINTS.

PART IV.—ROWE'S LIFE OF SHAKSPEARE.—1709.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

IT seems to be a kind of respect due to the memory of excellent men especially of those whom their wit and learning have made famous, to deliver some account of themselves, as well as their works, to posterity. For this reason, how fond do we see some people of discovering any little personal history of the great men of antiquity! their families, the common accident of their lives, and even their shape, make, and features have been the subject of critical inquiries. How trifling soever this curiosity may seem to be, it is certainly very natural; and we are hardly satisfied with an account of any remarkable person, till we have heard him described even to the very clothes he wears. As for what relates to men of letters, the knowledge of an author may sometimes conduce to the better understanding his book; and though the works of Mr. Shakspeare may seem to many not to want a comment, yet I fancy some little account of the man himself may not be thought improper to go along with them.

He was the son of Mr. John Shakspeare, and was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire, in April, 1564. His family, as appears by the register and publick writings relating to that town, were of good figure and fashion there, and are mentioned as gentlemen. His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had so large a family, ten children in all, that though he was his eldest son, he could give him no better education than his own employment. He had bred him, it is true, for some time at a free school, where, it is probable, he acquired what Latin he was master of; but the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forced his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his further proficiency in that language. It is without con-

troversy, that in his works we scarce find any traces of anything that looks like an imitation of the ancients. The delicacy of his taste, and the natural bent of his own great genius (equal, if not superior, to some of the best of theirs), would certainly have led him to read and study them with so much pleasure, that some of their fine images would naturally have insinuated themselves into, and been mixed with his own writings; so that his not copying at least something from them, may be an argument of his never having read them. Whether his ignorance of the ancients were a disadvantage to him or no, may admit of dispute; for though the knowledge of them might have made him more correct, yet it is not improbable but that the regularity and deference for them, which would have attended that correctness, might have restrained some of that fire, impetuosity, and even beautiful extravagance, which we admire in Shakspeare: and I believe we are better pleased with those thoughts, altogether new and uncommon, which his own imagination supplied him so abundantly with, than if he had given us the most beautiful passages out of the Greek and Latin poets, and that in the most agreeable manner that it was possible for a master of the English language to deliver them.

Upon his leaving school he seems to have given entirely into that way of living which his father proposed to him; and in order to settle in the world after a family manner, he thought fit to marry while he was yet very young. His wife was the daughter of one Hathaway, said to have been a substantial yeoman in the neighborhood of Stratford. In this kind of settlement he continued for some time, till an extravagance that he was guilty of forced him both out of his country and that way of living which he had taken up; and though it seemed at first to be a blemish upon his good manners, and a misfortune to him, yet it afterwards happily proved the occasion of exerting one of the greatest geniuses that ever was known in dramatick poetry. He had by a misfortune, common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company, and amongst them some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing, engaged him more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and in order to revenge that ill-usage he made a ballad upon him. And though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost, yet it is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire for some time, and shelter himself in London.

It is at this time, and upon this accident that he is said to have made his first acquaintance in the play-house. He was received into the company then in being, at first in a very mean rank, but his admirable wit and the natural turn of it to the stage, soon distinguished him, if not as an extraordinary actor, yet as an excellent writer. His name is printed, as the custom was in those times, amongst those of the other players, before some old plays, but without any particular account of what parts he used to play; and though I have inquired, I could never meet with

any further account of him this way than that the top of his performance was the Ghost, in his own Hamlet. I should have been much more pleased to have learned from certain authority which was the first play he wrote; it would be without doubt a pleasure to any man, curious in things of this kind, to see and know what was the first essay of a fancy like Shakspeare's. Perhaps we are not to look for his beginnings like those of other authors, among their least perfect writings; art had so little, and nature so large a share in what he did, that, for aught I know, the performances of his youth, as they were the most vigorous and had the most fire and strength of imagination in them, were the best. I would not be thought by this to mean that his fancy was so loose and extravagant as to be independent on the rule and government of judgment; but that what he thought, was commonly so great, so justly and rightly conceived in itself, that it wanted little or no correction, and was immediately approved by an impartial judgment at the first sight. But though the order of time in which the several pieces were written be generally uncertain, yet there are passages in some few of them which seem to fix their dates.

So the Chorus at the end of the fourth act of Henry the Fifth, by a compliment very handsomely turned to the Earl of Essex, shows the play to have been written when that lord was general for the Queen in Ireland; and his eulogy upon Queen Elizabeth, and her successor King James, in the latter end of his Henry the Eighth, is a proof of that play being written after the accession of the latter of these two princes to the crown of England. Whatever the particular times of his writing were, the people of his age, who began to grow wonderfully fond of diversions of this kind, could not but be highly pleased to see a genius arise among them of so pleasurable, so rich a vein, and so plentifully capable of furnishing their favourite entertainments. Besides the advantages of his wit, he was in himself a good-natured man, of great sweetness in his manners, and a most agreeable companion; so that it is no wonder, if, with so many good qualities, he made himself acquainted with the best conversations of those times. Queen Elizabeth had several of his plays acted before, and without doubt gave him many gracious marks of her favour; it is that maiden princess plainly, whom he intended by

> "—— a fair vestal, throned by the west."
>
> —*A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

And the whole passage is a compliment very properly brought in, and very handsomely applied to her. She was so well pleased with that admirable character of Falstaff in the Two Parts of Henry the Fourth, that she commanded him to continue it for one play more, and to show him in love. This is said to be the occasion of his writing The Merry Wives of Windsor. How well she was obeyed, the play itself is an admirable proof. Upon this occasion it may not be improper to observe, that this part of Falstaff is said to have been written originally under the name of Oldcastle: some of that family being then remaining, the Queen was pleased

to command him to alter it; upon which he made use of Falstaff. The present offence was indeed avoided; but I do not know whether the author may not have been somewhat to blame in his second choice, since it is certain that Sir John Falstaff, who was a knight of the garter, and a lieutenant-general, was a name of distinguished merit in the wars in France in Henry the Fifth's and Henry the Sixth's times. What grace soever the Queen conferred upon him, it was not to her only he owed the fortune which the reputation of his wit made. He had the honour to meet with many great and uncommon marks of favour and friendship from the Earl of Southampton, famous in the histories of that time for his friendship to the unfortunate Earl of Essex. It was to that noble lord that he dedicated his poem of Venus and Adonis. There is one instance so singular in the magnificence of this patron of Shakspeare's, that if I had not been assured that the story was handed down by Sir William d'Avenant, who was, probably very well acquainted with his affairs, I should not have ventured to have inserted; that my Lord Southampton at one time gave him a thousand pounds, to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to. A bounty very great, and very rare at any time, and almost equal to that profuse generosity the present age has shown to French dancers and Italian singers.

What particular habitude or friendships he contracted with private men, I have not been able to learn, more than that every one, who had a taste of merit and could distinguish men, had generally a just value and esteem for him. His exceeding candour and good-nature must certainly have inclined all the gentler part of the world to love him, as the power of his wit obliged the men of the most delicate knowledge and polite learning to admire him.

His acquaintance with Ben Jonson began with a remarkable piece of humanity and good-nature. Mr. Jonson, who was at that time altogether unknown to the world, had offered one of his plays to the players, in order to have it acted; and the persons into whose hands it was put, after having turned it carelessly and superciliously over, were just upon returning it to him with an ill-natured answer, that it would be of no service to their company; when Shakspeare luckily cast his eye upon it, and found something so well in it as to engage him first to read it through, and afterwards to recommend Mr. Jonson and his writings to the publick.

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